

Gator Times



USS NASSAU (LHA 4) — THE NAVY'S "TOP GATOR"

USN

**CPOs CELEBRATE
116
YEARS**



Gator Times

LHA 4 Contents

GatorTimes

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FEATURES

- 3 NASSAU CPOs celebrate 116th birthday
- 4 NASSAU intel team scores high marks
- 5-6 Trained rider = living rider / Motorcycle PPE
- 7 Dapa: Not the alcohol police
- 8 NASSAU officer wins shiphandling award
- 9 NASSAU officer recognized for excellence in tactics
- 10 So others may live

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Captain's Call
- 11 Command Achievements



On the Cover:
NASSAU CPOs celebrate 116th birthday.
Photo Illustration by MC2(SW) Michael Cortez

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I would like to open this month's newsletter by saying there is no place I would rather be than here now aboard this great warship. Nassau was my first and only choice, and Nancy and I could not be more blessed than to be part of the Nassau family! We look forward to getting to know each and every one of you in a personal way.

As you all know Nassau is out of drydock and back in the water where she belongs. The next step is steam plant testing followed by sea trials.

Soon the crew's primary goal will be the successful completion of workups, commonly referred to as the training cycle. Nassau is slated to visit the Fourth Fleet Area of Operations, our southern neighbors, later this year.

Since we are on the subject of deployment, I'd like to recognize two groups that should be in your thoughts. The Nassau Family Readiness Group and the Ombudsmen are both voluntary organizations run by spouses. They give freely of their personal time and their family's time to support us. This includes all the Sailors and their families aboard Nassau. They help families stay in touch and at times solve difficult, stressful problems. I am very thankful for the work they do in keeping

Captain's Call

Capt. Ronald Reis
Commanding Officer
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



lines of communication open between Sailors and their families.

In closing, Nassau is a fine warship with an outstanding crew. Be safe and have fun this spring.

Warmest regards, Ron.

CMC Corner

CMDM (AW/SW) Stan Kopiczak



Nassau Family and Friends,

As we approach the end of our maintenance availability, I want to thank everyone for their hard work and support over the past few months. After a winter of work on everything from the hull to the boilers, Nassau is coming back together and is looking great!

With that, our focus is turning from renovations and repairs to inspections and certifications. We are only a few weeks from departing BAE Norfolk Ship Repair and putting the ship through her paces in sea trials. Success there is the first step in ramping up for our deployment later this year.

That said, it's never too early to start planning. A good place to start is by attending a Nassau Family Readiness Group meeting. The Nassau FRG is a great family resource that not only offers support, but provides an avenue for family and friends to participate in the command's mission. I encourage everyone to attend at least one meeting to see what the group is about, because our Sailors can't accomplish the great things they do without support from home. Contact nfrgpresident@yahoo.com for more information.

Other things to consider in preparing for deployment may

seem mundane, but the farther we get from the pier the harder they are to deal with. These include taking care of legal matters such as wills and powers of attorney. These are easy set up with our Legalman's assistance prior to deployment, but they present a considerable challenge after we've departed.

Don't forget about your homes and automobiles. Make provisions now for maintaining what for most of us are our largest investments. Ensure any preventative maintenance is done beforehand, especially in the case of autos going into storage. Sitting dormant for a period of months can cause deterioration that you won't normally see in a car driven daily.

Finally, the Atlantic hurricane season runs from June through November, and eastern Virginia is especially at risk for a major storm. Forty Hampton Roads-based ships and submarines got underway and remained at sea until the threat from Hurricane Isabel subsided in September 2003. It is essential that Nassau Sailors and their families be prepared and stay informed. That preparation should include putting together a kit for your family to use in case of an emergency and making a plan so you know what to do in the event of a storm.

Navy families are encouraged to contact the Fleet and Family Support Centers of Hampton Roads (FFSC) at 444-NAVY (6289) or 1-800-FSC-LINE (372-5463) for more information. Additional information for families is available online at the Hampton Roads Emergency Council Web site at www.hremc.org, the Federal Emergency Management Agency Web site, at www.fema.gov, and the Commonwealth of Virginia's emergency preparedness Web site at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

Once again I'd like to thank all our Sailors for all their hard work and our families for the wonderful support, thoughts and prayers. That's it until next issue, take care and God Bless!

Nassau Chief Petty Officers celebrate 116th birthday

By MC2 Amanda Clayton
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Officers, Chief Petty Officers (CPO) and junior Sailors aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) assembled on the mess decks to celebrate the 116th birthday of the CPO.

The ceremony began with a speech from Master Chief Hull Technician (SW/AW) Ronnie Merriman.

"Today we take the time to celebrate those who have come before us," said Merriman. "We take the time to celebrate their determination, hard work and perseverance. We have trained and mentored our junior Sailors, division officers and most of all, ourselves".

A traditional cake-cutting ceremony took place after the speech in which the newest chief, Chief Aviation Electronics Technician (AW/SW) Jeremy Korneli, and the most senior chief onboard, Master Chief Machinist's Mate (SW/AW) John Engelbert cut the cake.



Nassau's newest and most senior Chief Petty Officers cut the cake.
Photo by MC2 Amanda Clayton

Many of Nassau's deckplate leaders said they were honored to be part of the celebration.

"I am ecstatic today to be a chief. Our Navy is changing daily and shrinking in size, which puts more emphasis on being a good chief. On our 116th birthday, I am proud to wear the uniform and discharge the duties and responsibilities entrusted in the chief," said Senior Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Jeffrey Barlow.

Chief Culinary Specialist (SW/AW) Aliethia Young said she could not agree more.

"I am proud to be a part of Nassau's deckplate leadership. I remember making chief on the ship, and I must say I have learned a lot from the Nassau Chiefs' Mess. The most important thing I have learned is to take care of my Sailors first. It is because of our Sailors that Nassau is known as the 'Top Gator'."

The CPO Birthday is a time-honored celebration that reemphasizes not only heritage and tradition, but also the future of CPO leadership.

"Just as the backbone in our body is the foundation to which the body builds around, the chief is the foundation to which the Navy builds Sailors and the mission," said Barlow. "CPO's execute the mission as set forth by the officers in naval leadership. We are proud to lead the Navy into the 21st Century and beyond."



Nassau Sailors wait in line for a piece of the ceremonial cake.
Photo by MC2 Amanda Clayton

Nassau's Intel team scores high marks

By MC1 Mary Popejoy
USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Intelligence Team received Honorable Mention for the 2008 Intelligence Excellence Award. This is the second time Nassau has received the honor.

During Nassau's deployment to the European Command and Central Command areas of responsibility, the ship's Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) professionally supported the Nassau Expeditionary Strike Group's decision makers, planners and operators during two major exercises and three critical operations.

The JIC's officers and enlisted Intelligence Specialists provided source analysis and threat assessments in support of maritime security operations, theater security cooperation, presence operations, power projection, sea control and humanitarian assistance disaster relief contingency exercises.

"The team expertly supported theater wide indications and warning as well as the strike group's operations and force protection," said Lt. Justin Scarbrough, Nassau's assistant intelligence officer.

"Nassau's JIC also supported the embarked staff and executed a no-notice interagency intelligence preparation of the

operational environment enroute to the Gulf of Mexico.

"The JIC team performed flawlessly during Exercise Phoenix Express 2008, where their analytical skills and research ability were instrumental in supporting this complex scenario involving 11 NATO and North African nations," said Scarbrough.

The team also provided all-source analysis of storm impacts in affected areas and produced detailed maps of Galveston Island in support of Nassau's disaster relief efforts following Hurricane Ike.

"I was very impressed with the technical knowledge and enthusiasm of the JIC team," said Scarbrough. "They easily adapted to any situation we threw at them, and that was just awesome to watch."

The JIC team is gearing up for Nassau's next deployment, and setting the bar even higher for next year's competition.

"We're going to keep training and working on ways to better educate ourselves on situations out there," said Scarbrough. "Our goal is to meet the needs of our customers, so we can better do our job as war fighters."



Nassau Strike Group transits across the Atlantic Ocean at the end of their 2008 Med-Gulf Deployment.
Photo by MC3 Jonathan Pankau

Trained rider = living rider

By MC2 Shane Arrington
USS Nassau Public Affairs

For Master-at-Arms 2nd Class (SW/AW) Michael Sanders, it was just another day riding his sports bike home from work...until a car pulled out right in front of him and hit him head on.

"It happened so fast," Sanders said. "I didn't have time to react or anything. One second I'm riding, the next I'm on the road."

Fortunately for Sanders, he was wearing all the proper Personal Protective Equipment, or PPE. He said he can't imagine what it would have been like otherwise.

"I was blessed," he said. "I was banged up quite a bit, but my gear protected me from bad road rash. No matter what speed you're going, the pavement is unforgiving. If it wasn't for my PPE, especially my helmet...It'd be lights out."

While Sanders said this incident happened so fast he didn't have time to think before the moment of impact, he credits the safety courses he's required to attend by the Navy for helping to save his life.

"Having the proper training on a bike can make all the difference," Sanders said. "Even for those who are already experienced riders, just brushing up on the basics, or perhaps learning that one little trick you didn't know, could make riding a more safe and pleasurable experience."

Even having gone through all the required courses, respecting the bike they're on and the road, some people don't come out of incidences such as the one Sanders was in with as much luck.

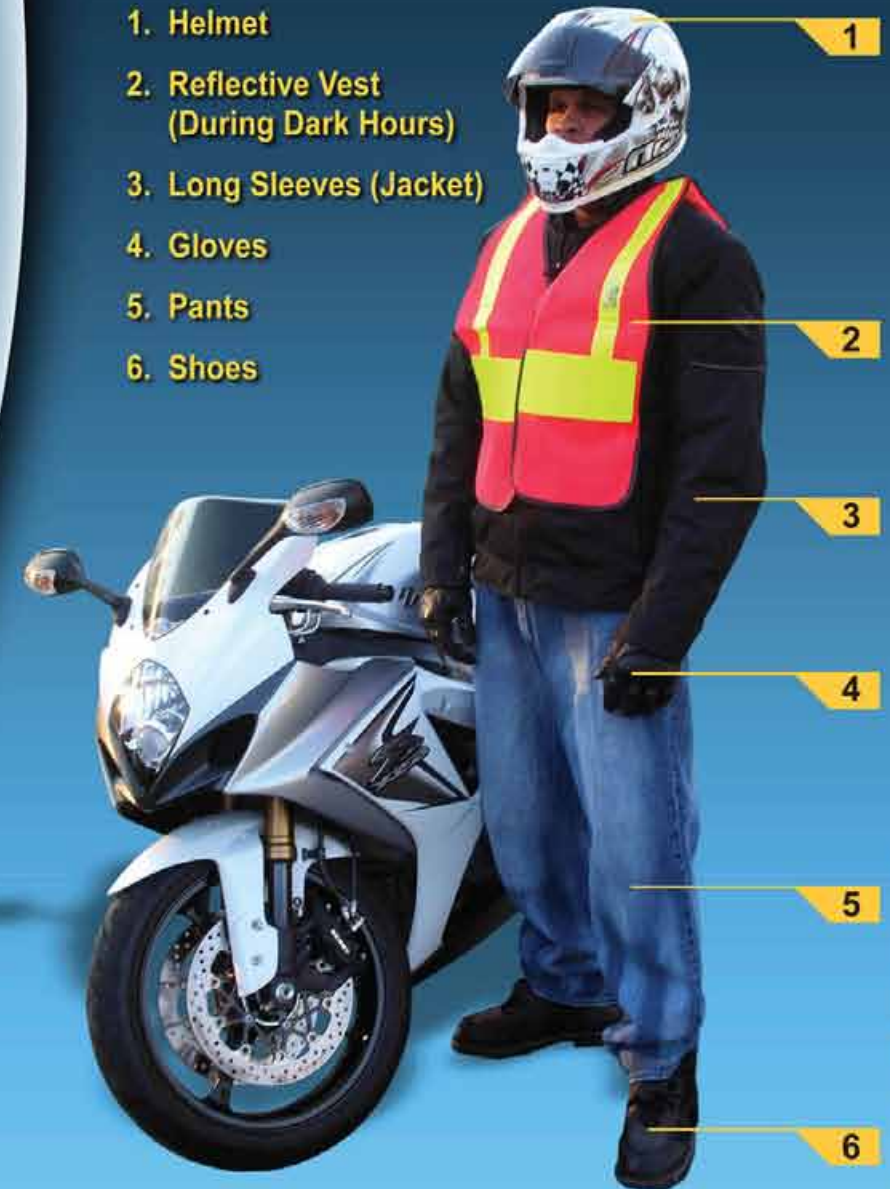
According to the Naval Safety Center website, as of March 13th, there have already been four Sailors killed on motorcycles this fiscal year.

Sanders said those considering riding shouldn't let the bad stories about motorcycles scare them from riding. He said it's a feeling he loves and even though he has less protection, he feels more freedom on a bike. Riders should however, remember to take all the safety courses, pay extra attention to their surroundings while riding, and remember to be safe and have fun.



Proper PPE

1. Helmet
2. Reflective Vest (During Dark Hours)
3. Long Sleeves (Jacket)
4. Gloves
5. Pants
6. Shoes



DAPA: not the alcohol police

By MC1 Mary Popejoy
USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA) helps crewmembers who struggle with alcohol.

Senior Chief Aviation Electronics Technician (AW/SW) Raul Castro is Nassau's Command DAPA and coordinates all drug and alcohol education, rehabilitation, identification, and enforcement efforts aboard the ship.

Castro said that with seven counselors on hand to assist him, a major goal is to reduce the command's driving under the influence rate to zero.

"We're here to help, but we're not the alcohol police," said Castro. "We want Sailors to know how to set a personal limit, drink at a proper place and proper time, and be of legal drinking age."

As Command DAPA, Castro sees Sailors who have an alcohol-related incident, are referred by the command, or refer themselves for treatment. Once referred, they go through a screening process which includes a survey of the Sailor, the Sailor's supervisor, and a medical screening. If warranted, the ship's senior medical officer will then determine a treatment

plan based on the screening.

"Sailors feel they have a problem with alcohol they need to come see me," said Castro. "I can share information with them, and point them in the right direction."

Nassau holds a weekly meeting called "Friends of Bill," a shipboard version of Alcoholics Anonymous. The command also has an alcohol deglamorization (DEGLAM) program that rewards the crew for acting responsibly. If the command goes one month without a DUI, the command gets a three-day weekend.

If the Sailor gets a DUI, the Sailor and his division will come in on a Saturday for alcohol awareness training with the executive officer.

This program is designed to promote teamwork and accountability for sailors.

Castro believes that a team concept is the way to go to be successful in reducing the amount of alcoholic incidents.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, which is why we as leaders need to do a better job of looking for signs that our Sailors need help," said Castro.

"We need to know our Sailors, make ourselves approachable, and make certain that they can trust us to help them."



Senior Chief Aviation Electronics Technician (AW/SW) Raul Castro speaks to a Nassau sailor on alcohol awareness.
Photo by MC2 Amanda Clayton

Nassau officer wins shiphandling award

By MC1 Mary Popejoy
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Commander, Naval Surface Forces Vice Adm. D. C. Curtis recently announced that an engineering officer aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) won the 2008 Junior Officer Award for Excellence in Shiphandling.

Lt.j.g. David Beaver was selected as the best shiphandler in Amphibious Squadron Six, and is now considered among the best in the Navy.

The award symbolizes how essential ship handling proficiency is in today's Navy. Beaver's selection has placed him in an elite group of ship handlers who are considered the very best in the Navy.

As Nassau's assistant MPA/MP2 division officer, Beaver spends most of his time in the engine room. He is also fully qualified as an officer of the deck underway and conducted the ship through several critical transits. He was hand-picked as the conning officer for disaster relief operations in Galveston, Texas, following Hurricane Ike, as well as transits to Naval Weapons Station Earle, N.J., and New York.

"The award usually goes to a Surface Warfare Officer, so for a Limited Duty Officer to get this recognition really means a lot to me," said Beaver.

"As an engineer I usually don't get to do stuff like this, so to be able to do this was a pretty significant milestone in my career."

Former Nassau Commanding Officer Capt. James R. Boorujy wrote in his nomination letter that "Beaver has earned my utmost trust and confidence as a shiphandler."

"I want Beaver as the conning officer for the most difficult underway replenishment approaches or to recover a man overboard."

His award submission highlighted his skills as a shiphandler and bridge watchstander. Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Newbrough, Nassau's training officer, submitted Beaver for the award. He was thrilled to hear about Beaver's selection.

"He is a top-notch watchstander and a calming influence on the bridge," said Newbrough.



Lt.j.g. David Beaver watches closely over a midshipman's shoulder as he logs course and speed during an underway replenishment.
Photo by MC3 Jonathan Pankau

Nassau officer recognized for excellence in tactics

By MC2 Shane Arrington
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Commander Naval Surface Forces Vice Adm. D.C. Curtis recently announced that an officer aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) won the 2008 Junior Officer Award for Excellence in Tactics.

Nassau Training Officer Lt. Cmdr. Patrick J. Newbrough won the award which recognizes tactical action officers below the rank of commander who display extraordinary prowess and understanding of warfare areas their ship is assigned to carry out.

Tactical action officers are officers entrusted by their commanding officer with warfare operations, such as employing weapons systems during combat.

"It definitely feels good to see one's name in message traffic for this type of award," said Newbrough. "This type of recognition outside the lifelines of the ship is great for a Sailor's career, and is something everyone should strive to accomplish."

Newbrough said the award highlights the efforts of a great team of tactical watchstanders who worked very hard during

Nassau's latest deployment and Hurricane Ike relief operations in Galveston, Texas.

"It's a team effort," Newbrough said. "There's no way I could have won without the support of all the folks who stand watch throughout the ship."

Newbrough said he believes the hours of standing watch in Nassau's Combat Information Center and his efforts on the ship's Integrated Training Team, training other watchstanders, played a significant role in his selection.

"While on watch I tried my best to make sure the whole team understood what was going on and that we had an accurate picture of all air and surface contacts," said Newbrough.

"When something happened, such as an unknown contact closing in on Nassau, I made sure we took the appropriate actions to keep the ship safe without unduly escalating tensions."



Lt. Cmdr. Patrick J. Newbrough stands watch on the port bridge wing.
Photo by MC2 Shane Arrington

So others may live

By MC2 Shane Arrington
Photos by MCSA Christopher Williamson
USS Nassau Public Affairs

The Search and Rescue (SAR) motto is "So others may live." To Nassau (LHA 4) SAR swimmer Religious Programs Specialist 3rd Class Joseph Stroney that means making a commitment to do whatever it takes to save the life of someone in trouble.

"As a SAR swimmer you've got to be able to jump into any situation without hesitation," said Nassau (LHA 4) Search and Rescue swimmer Religious Programs Specialist 3rd Class Joseph Stroney. "While search and rescue may be our primary mission, we're not limited to just that. We're trained to handle basically anything that happens in the water."

"The training is a mixture of very intense swimming and dry land physical training. We're also required to keep up our SAR certification as well CPR and other first aid qualifications."

Stroney said there are many reasons he decided to become a SAR swimmer, and that so far, it has been a very rewarding experience.

"Who doesn't like the idea of knowing you're capable of saving a drowning victim and making a difference in someone's life. Also, I'm very athletic and love to swim, so this gives me the perfect opportunity to stay physically fit and swim in the ocean. Who knows, perhaps one day I'll get to swim in a place no one has before."



SAR swimmer, RP3 Joseph Stroney conducts training evolutions.
Photo by MCSA Christopher Williamson



SAR swimmer, RP3 Joseph Stroney practices jumping into the water.
Photo by MCSA Christopher Williamson



Contact your departmental coordinator for more information.

